



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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**PAWTUCKET'S STANDARD PAPER BOX CORPORATION MILL COMPLEX
LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

A century-old Pawtucket mill complex has received federal recognition for its contributions to the history of industry and architecture. State Historic Preservation Officer Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, announced that the National Park Service has added the Standard Paper Box Corporation plant to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of properties throughout the United States whose historical and architectural significance makes them worthy of preservation. Built for the manufacture of cardboard boxes, the Standard Paper Box Corporation mill complex is an important example of the factories that provided essential services to the region's jewelry industry.

The Standard Paper Box complex includes a group of attached 1- and 2-story industrial buildings occupying much of a city block on Kenyon Street in Pawtucket's Pleasant View neighborhood. The oldest building is a red brick, 2-story, L-plan structure with a shallow pitched gable roof. It was erected in 1914 as a single-story factory building, and the second story and a rear ell were added around 1939. A second building was constructed by 1920 as a single-story, wood-frame, flat-roofed structure and was expanded in all directions between 1939 and 1949.

In 1912, Charles K. Shaw, Philip L. Benoit, and William D. Wilson incorporated a new company to manufacture "cardboard, paper, paper substitutes, paper boxes, paper goods of all kinds, calendars, advertising novelties and specialties, and such novelties as can be manufactured from cardboard, paper, wood, cloth, leather, glass, minerals [and] metals." The principals purchased the assets of the Pawtucket Box Company, set up business at the downtown Pawtucket location, and established a branch operation in Woonsocket. In early 1914, the Standard Paper Box Corporation erected a brick mill building on Kenyon Avenue. By 1920, the plant had been expanded by the construction of a 50' x 75' wood-frame storehouse.

Despite the departure of principal Charles Shaw, business at Standard Paper Box grew steadily through the 1920s. The firm manufactured a wide range of display boxes and gift boxes for the jewelry industry. By 1933, Standard Paper Box was caught in a common Depression-era squeeze: customers unable to pay for purchased goods and creditors demanding payment. The company went bankrupt with money due to a long list of creditors, including suppliers of ribbon,

gold stamping, wadding, adhesives, metal clasps, paperboard, and engraving services.

Lewis Douglas Young, the owner of a competing paper box manufacturing company, acquired Standard Paper Box and all of its assets at public auction in May 1933. The new firm, renamed Douglas Young, Incorporated, was able to provide relatively steady employment for its workers through the remainder of the Great Depression. In the World War II era, Young undertook a significant expansion of the plant. This included adding a second story to the original 1914 factory building, expanding the rear ell, and expanding the wood-frame storehouse. A later project in 1961 extended the façade further north along Kenyon Avenue to the present-day dimensions. As owner, Douglas Young received 41 patents for various aspects of box and display design.

After Young died in 1968, Donald Barrengos became president. He oversaw the 1970 construction of the last building on the site and acquired the company in 1971. Fuller Packaging purchased the property in 1987. Seven years later, the plant was sold and subdivided. Current owners, 110 Kenyon Ave., LLC, plan an adaptive reuse project to convert the industrial buildings into live/work units and some commercial spaces.

The National Register nomination for the Standard Paper Box Corporation mill complex was prepared by preservation consultant Ned Connors. According to Sanderson of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, “For years this modest factory produced a fantastic variety of decorative specialty boxes for Rhode Island’s nationally important jewelry manufacturers. Standard Paper Box Mill complex reflects an era when scores of interrelated local industries thrived and gave employment to Rhode Island families. Through historic rehabilitation, this factory will continue to serve the Pleasant View neighborhood.”

In addition to honoring a property for its contribution to local, state, or national history, listing on the National Register provides additional benefits. It results in special consideration during the planning of Federal or federally assisted projects and makes properties eligible for Federal tax benefits for historic rehabilitation projects. Owners of private property listed on the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose. As the state office for historic preservation, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is responsible for reviewing and submitting Rhode Island nominations to the National Register.

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